

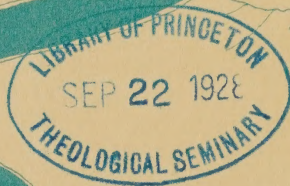


THE STORY OF SAINT CHRISTOPHER

II-2.
C4664ai

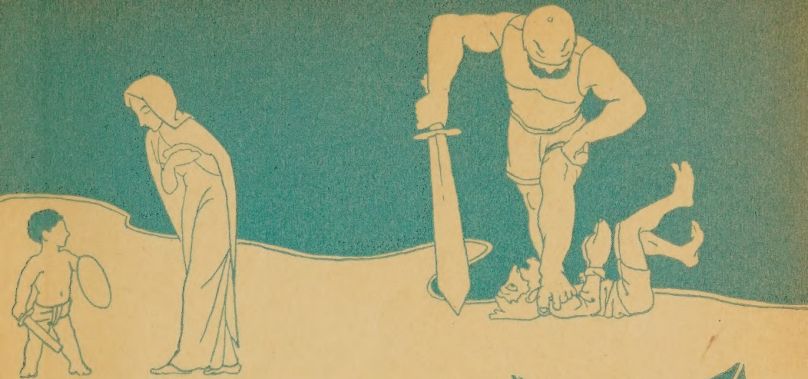
JOHN AINSWORTH

4700 .C57 A5 1928
sworth, John.
e story of Saint
christopher



Division

Section



THE STORY OF SAINT CHRISTOPHER



THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

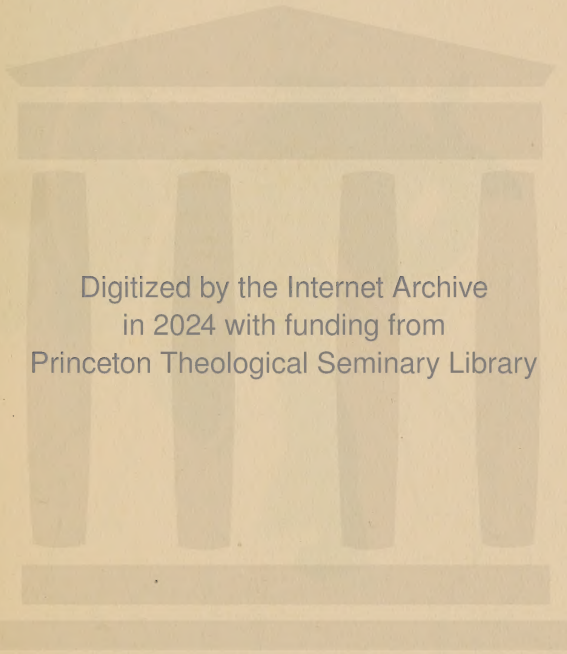
NEW YORK . BOSTON . CHICAGO . DALLAS
ATLANTA . SAN FRANCISCO

MACMILLAN & CO., LIMITED

LONDON . BOMBAY . CALCUTTA
MELBOURNE

THE MACMILLAN CO. OF CANADA, LTD.

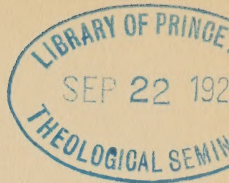
TORONTO



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2024 with funding from
Princeton Theological Seminary Library



He went through battles on a great fast elephant.



THE STORY
OF
SAINT CHRISTOPHER

BY
JOHN AINSWORTH

Illustrated by Robert Joyce

New York
THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
1928

COPYRIGHT, 1928,
By THE MACMILLAN COMPANY.

Set up and electrotyped.
Published June, 1928

Printed in the United States of America by
THE STRATFORD PRESS, INC.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
THE LAND OF SYRIA	1
MARY'S GIFT	5
DARKNESS	8
STARLIGHT	12
THE MOUNTAIN	19
THE MASTER IN ASIA	24
SATAN	36
THE CITY OF THE CHRISTIANS	44
THE CROSS	52
THE MASTER	63
WHAT PEOPLE HAVE THOUGHT OF SAINT CHRISTOPHER	82

ILLUSTRATIONS

	PAGE
He went through battles on a great fast elephant	<i>Frontispiece</i>
It was often fighting that brought them through .	21
"Greetings!" said the Devil	31
"I am not Satan," said Christopher	57
He would send the haughty ones back	65
Christopher seemed to be carrying the world on his back	77

THE STORY OF SAINT CHRISTOPHER

The Story of Saint Christopher

THE LAND OF SYRIA



two or three hundred years had gone by since the coming of our Lord. And the world had not yet understood the faith that He had brought. But there were places where men worshiped Him.

In those days there reigned in Syria a heathen king.

Now Syria is a strange country, and a very ancient one. Even in the times we speak of, it was full of ruined cities where nobody lived any more. There were huge stone towers and temples and fortresses that had been built before men wrote history books. There are only

The Story of Saint Christopher

a few inscriptions in wedge-shaped letters, which some wise people have learned to read, and which tell us that those walls and towers had been built by powerful emperors. But we know little about these emperors, except that they were cruel and warlike.

Then too, in Syria there are great trees—a little like pines, but with all the branches away up in the air. We call them cedars of Lebanon, from one of the hills where they grew. There are palm trees, too, and other trees and plants. But the country is sandy and hot.

In a neighboring land flow the Euphrates and one or two other rivers. It is called Mesopotamia and its greatest city was Babylon, where the queen Semiramis had made wonderful gardens. These gardens were called the Hanging Gardens, because they were halfway between the earth and the clouds. They were not as high as all that; but the legends try to make us believe they were. Travelers tell us that there are still a few walls and columns left, almost overgrown with weeds and vines. And they say that the only people who go there now are shepherds leading their goats to graze.

Perhaps Babylon was the city where the king and queen held their court, for we can

The Land of Syria

not be sure whether they lived in Syria or in Mesopotamia. But the countries were near together and so it makes little difference.

Nobody tells us whether the kingdom of the king and queen was important or not. But what is certain is that they had no child to inherit their power and their wealth. The king was like other kings in that he was covetous of these things; and he wished above all else that the realm should always be his very own, even when death should come to lay him in his heavy tomb. Therefore he desired that a son might be born, so that the counsels of the dead might forever be received with the awe and respect men feel for the words of their ancestors.

The queen, too, was thoughtful of the future. And she did not wish to lose her credit with the king her master through never bearing a son who should reign over the land when she and the king were grown old and unsure of their own acts.

Now you know that all this happened long, long ago—only two centuries or so after the coming of our Lord Jesus. Two centuries may seem a vast time, as of course it is. But it takes more than that for good ideas to spread through the whole world. And that is why

The Story of Saint Christopher

the king and queen were pagans and did not understand that Christ had taught a better religion than that of the pagan gods.

The names of the gods worshiped in Syria were Mechmet and Apollo. You may hear them mentioned, once in a while, when you come to read the histories that were written long ago. But it is unlikely that you will ever hear much good of either of them. Apollo, it is true, was not altogether bad, since they say that he liked to make beautiful buildings and statues. But he seems to have done it for his own pleasure, without any thought of doing good to mankind. In any case, neither he nor Mechmet was kind-hearted or charitable. And the proof is, that they would not bother to send a son to the king and queen.

It happened that there were a few Christians in Syria, and they had told the queen that Mary was always kind to those who asked any good thing of her.

So the queen thought that she would try, asking Mary, the virgin mother of Jesus, to grant her the boon of a son. And Mary was touched by the prayer of the queen, and sent down a child to be heir to the kingdom.

MARY'S GIFT.



ere our story begins. Of course, it must begin with the name that was given to the child. Well, it was a long, hard Syrian name you never heard and never could pronounce, even if you tried ever so long. And so it will be better to tell you the name that was given to him later, and which you already know. It was Christopher, and that is what we shall call him from now on.

This son of the queen's was no ordinary boy. It was not long before everybody could see that he would some day be more than human in size. And then, he had a certain honesty about him that all children do not

The Story of Saint Christopher

have. On the other hand, he was sometimes a bit slow in learning what his teachers explained to him.

He did not ask many questions, but everybody could see that he did not believe any lies. As time went on it became clear that he would grow to be as tall as any of the old giants of legend. Even when he was in his 'teens, he was taller than the tallest of the royal guards. And afterwards, when he was a young man, he was so enormous that he could find no horse strong enough to carry him to the wars; so he got a great fast elephant to ride, and went through many battles in that way.

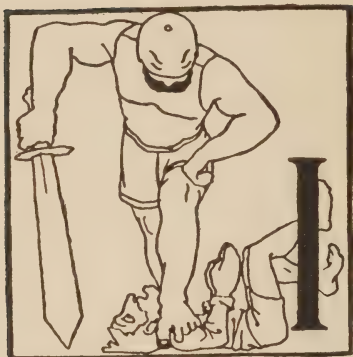
Whenever Christopher fought, you may believe that the enemy was defeated. For he would not take them one by one, but always charged right into the middle of a regiment, fighting everybody at once. That was not taking an undue advantage of his size; for a dozen ordinary soldiers ought to have been able to kill him with bows and arrows. But they never did.

Now the queen his mother, seeing all this, came to have the utmost admiration for Mary, who had given her this son. And besides, she was grateful. But she never dared to tell

her secret to the king, for he would have been angry enough and would have said that she had betrayed him by forsaking Mechmet and Apollo. Perhaps he would not even have believed that Mary had given him an heir. For he was not a very reasonable man. So the queen kept her counsel, since there was only harm to come of her telling how it really had happened.

But she was a good woman, and wished to repay Mary, in some way, for the gift of Christopher. She thought about it a long time, and finally decided that the best way to show her gratitude would be to help the Christians, whom Mary loved. Many were the poor among them who found bread and meat and wine on their doorsteps in the morning. And many were the Christians kept to feed the lions of the circus who found themselves free. Officers would come to their prisons, at night, and open their cells, so that they would find themselves alone and happy again, under the laughing stars. And Mary was glad in Heaven to see these signs of the queen's gratitude.

DARKNESS



n t h e
meantime, Christopher was not as contented as most young men would have been under such circumstances. But it is true that he did not know the story of his miraculous birth.

First of all, he did not have any great success with his books, which was probably only because he had grown so fast. But he did not know that, and came to have a feeling that he did not amount to very much, and never would. For all the young men about the court, and even many of the simple soldiers, were more clever than he.

As for his prowess in battle, he did not feel very proud of that. For, he thought, it was

only natural that he should always be victorious, since he had been given more weight, and agility, and muscle than the rest.

When he thought, then, that some day he should be king, it only made him unhappy. For he did not feel it in him to lead other men. What he could do—and all that he could do well—was to serve. But, although he was kind to ordinary people, he was proud, too, in his way: the only person he would be willing to serve must be stronger than he was—which was asking a good deal. But the idea of finding someone like that grew and grew in his mind, until it drove out all other thoughts. He lived in the sole hope of finding that man who should be stronger than himself.

The city where the king held his court was visited by many traveling merchants. And strange people they were. It was not very far from the Mediterranean Sea; Africa lay to the south-west; the Caspian Sea and the mysterious lands of Armenia and Scythia to the north; to the east were Persia and Baluchistan, and all the countries that are in India and China. And so Asiatic merchants came from the east, half-savage Scythians from the north, and Africans from the south; and from the

The Story of Saint Christopher

west, on the Mediterranean shore, all sorts of Europeans in strange ships.

Almost all of these merchants came to Christopher's city on camels, for there was a desert that stretched away on every side. So even the merchants from Europe had to come from the sea in caravans; and the way to Asia and Africa was over enormous waste lands where any horse would die of heat and thirst. The great market-place was always full of these caravans. Sometimes they were led by men as black as night, from Abyssinia; sometimes by bronzed Bedouins from the Sahara. Then there were Egyptians and Greeks and Jews from Alexandria. From France and Italy came Gauls and Romans and Sicilian Greeks. As for the strange races from India and China and Scythia, there were so many of them, and so different, that it would take too long to describe them all.

Whenever any of these merchants had any wares that were particularly rare, he would of course go to the palace and offer them to the king and queen. Christopher liked more than anything else to watch these foreign people, and to hear the interesting tales they had to tell.

He had his own good reason for noticing them. It was because he always hoped to hear of some king or prince stronger than he, and whom he might go to serve. But all these merchants—and some of them were very tall and fierce—no sooner got a glimpse of him than they went white through their tan. He needed no other proof that they knew no one stronger than he.

STARLIGHT



One day there came into the market-place the strangest caravan that had ever been seen. The wares they offered to the court were most costly and beautiful, and some of the things were entirely unknown. Everybody was eager to see, and it took days and days. Never had such rich and beautiful things been offered in the king's city.

But that was not all. And it is easy to believe that it was not the most important for the common people who could not buy. In the first place, the camels these merchants had were huge beasts such as had never come into Syria within the memory of man. An

ordinary camel standing beside one of them looked no bigger than a horse. Then there were other animals to carry bales and boxes; they looked something like cattle, except that they were much bonier and heavier, and so fierce that none but the foreign drivers could come near them. These drivers were wiry little men with yellowish faces and eyes that went up at the outer end, a little like a Chinaman's. But Chinese caravans had come to the king's city before, and everyone agreed that these were no Chinamen. The camel-drivers were different: they were taller, and their skin was a sort of dull gray, like rain-clouds. They wore great turbans, and wicked-looking daggers stuck through their broad sashes. People there were who said they came from some part of India that nobody had ever seen. Probably they did, but since their language was entirely unknown, it was impossible to ask them. And to this day we do not know just who they were.

But in respect to their being unknown, these men were like the others. The yellow men and the dark men talked among themselves a little, and did their work. And the masters of the caravan and the guards were not much

The Story of Saint Christopher

more given to gossip. These were very different, though, from any of the drivers. They were more savage and fierce in appearance than any men you can imagine. In color they were something between the two kinds of drivers. But in size! Christopher himself was uneasy when he first came into the market-place and saw them stalking about, like enormous heroic statues come to life. He was taller than any of them, and broader of shoulder. But any of the masters or guards would have been a match for half a dozen of the king's soldiers. These guards, besides being enormously tall, were as quick and lithe as tigers. They had great, fleet camels to ride, and wore steel breastplates. Their helmets looked about like funnels turned upside down. Each had a bull's-hide shield with metal bosses, a bow about seven feet long with arrows to match, and a sword almost as big, curved, and made so that it was broader at the end than at the hilt. There were two hundred of these soldiers. It was not very hard to understand how it was that the caravan had come so far without any mishap.

Christopher sent for the master of all these people, who came into his presence with an

interpreter who appeared to be a Persian or a Hindu. The master of the caravan was polite enough, but not in the least servile. He looked the prince full in the eyes while they talked—a thing that merchants never did with royalty, in Syria.

“Your Highness,” said the master of the caravan, “you ask me whence I come, and what the king of my country is like. I answer that mine is the most beautiful and the richest land I have seen in all my long traveling across the world. And my king is the strongest of men.”

“How does one get to your country? And if I should go to offer service to your king, would he receive me well?” asked Christopher.

“I will give you a fleet camel and five of my best soldiers, with an interpreter, to lead you to my king, if you so wish,” said the master of the caravan. “And I will give you a letter in my language, describing your high estate and your desire to serve my king.”

That night there was a thin crescent moon half hidden by driving clouds. And Christopher stole silently out of the palace at midnight to a garden gate where the five foreign soldiers and the interpreter awaited him.

The Story of Saint Christopher

Without a word he climbed on his camel, and the seven huge forms glided out of the city, and then shot across the gray desert beyond, on their long journey. Christopher had begun his first adventure.

It was to be a long one, for the merchant's country was far away, in the heart of Asia. Christopher and his companions crossed deserts and rivers and mountains, and lakes that were as broad as seas. At first, in the Syrian desert, it was very hot; but as they went on they came to a high table-land where there was snow, among forests of pines and oaks. Then they came upon a mountain with two peaks that glittered like icicles in the morning sun. The interpreter said that this was the spot where Noah had first seen land in the time of the Deluge, and that the mountain was Ararat.

After that they came to a country of dangerous roads and more dangerous men. But these people were always in small bands, and they were afraid to attack such giants as Christopher and his companions.

Coming out of this region, they went down finally into a fertile plain where grass and trees and flowers were all waving in a gentle

breeze, and where streams sparkled among groves of olive and almond. There were abandoned cities, too, as in Syria. But there were prosperous, lively towns as well, and palaces without number.

Christopher hoped this might be the end of their journey. He thought it might very well be, since the land was the most beautiful he could imagine, and corresponded with the description of the master of the caravan. But one thing worried him: the people were not taller than most men, nor stronger, and stared at him and the guards in open-eyed amazement, as they swept along on their great camels. So he asked if this was the end of their journey.

"Prince," replied the interpreter, "it is not. Our journey has lasted a month already; it will last many more. And as we go on we shall encounter dangers the like of which are not in this land."

The interpreter said all that very coolly, like the experienced traveler and soldier he was.

As he said it, he turned to the five soldiers, and spoke to them in their language. Christopher could not understand the tongue very well, as yet. But he saw a grim smile come

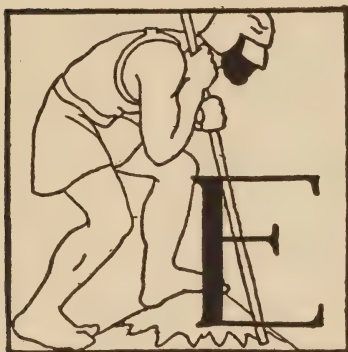
The Story of Saint Christopher

over their faces when the interpreter had spoken. And one or two of them looked toward the East, with narrowing eyes and tightened mouth.

Somehow or other, Christopher was pleased by this, rather than disappointed or discouraged. Probably that was because he was brave, and because he was willing to risk much to learn about the world he lived in. Above all, he felt that he could never enjoy living at all, unless he could find a master whom he might admire and serve well. "Perhaps," he thought, "I shall find my master in the East—in Asia."

They stayed there for a few days, so that the camels might rest. Then they went on.

THE MOUNTAIN



Everything happened as the interpreter had said. For they were many a weary month upon their journey, and each month brought dangers more terrible than the last. Everywhere the people seemed determined that they should not pass, and it was fighting, as often as the fair speech of the interpreter, that brought them through.

Moreover, the very land itself was evil. It climbed skyward so high that they could hardly breathe. They had to wear heavy capes of fur to keep from freezing. The camels were left at the base of the mountain-range, for they could never have outlived the cold of those altitudes. Christopher and his companions

traveled now with those strange, oxlike creatures that he had seen in the caravan. They had come into the land where the yellow drivers lived; and the interpreter had hired some of them to drive these beasts. For weeks they went through the white silence of fields of ice. The idea occurred to Christopher that it was very solitary and blank there, and that men might easily go mad in such a place.

But the soldiers and drivers plodded on steadily, having enough to do to keep their bearings, so that they should not be lost or fall from the tremendous cliffs along which their road lay. Here the animals were more useful than the men, for they were as sure-footed as cats, and seemed to know exactly where the road was that would finally bring them out into the flat land again.

One day the interpreter sent a soldier ahead with the fastest of the beasts.

Two days more of traveling, and they camped. Then the soldier returned, and they went on. It was a silvery, starlit night, and they looked like seven ghosts along the cliff-edge. When the stars began to fade in the sky they were in the pass to the plain. And when the sun blazed forth again they were on a high



It was often fighting that brought them through.

The Mountain

spur of the mountain; and at their feet was an endless plain.

“Below is the end of our journey,” said the interpreter. “Another day and another night, and then you shall meet the king.”

And through the morning haze Christopher could see that they had not lied. For this was surely the fairest land in all the world.

THE MASTER IN ASIA



ven before they had come to the level country they met soldiers like Christopher's companions—enormous, silent men who let them pass, on a mere sign from the soldier who had been sent ahead. They looked admiringly at Christopher, but without much surprise.

"Their king is surely a taller and a stronger man than I," he thought. "Yes, I shall find my master in Asia."

Houses were rare in the country, for the people loved to roam about and to live in tents. But the cities had great stone palaces and temples, and groves and lakes where the people could go to walk, or play games, or

swim. The sky was half hidden by flaunting banners of every color. The interpreter said that the nation was so strong, so prosperous, and so brave, that all the people in it were happy the whole year round.

Christopher was taken to a house which had been set apart for him by the king. This house was so high that it seemed like a tower. In fact, it was not unlike a Chinese pagoda, or temple. And yet it was not Chinese, any more than the king's subjects were. It was filled with furniture that was more beautiful than any that Christopher had ever seen; and—what was more—it was large enough for him to use. That was almost a new experience, since he had been uncomfortable all his life in Syrian palaces, where nothing was large enough for his comfort. Then there was a garden, with a park for his pleasure.

After a day and a night they took him to see the king, as the interpreter had promised.

It was a memorable meeting.

After going through endless gardens, and then through innumerable rooms, his guides brought him into the royal presence. The king was the most enormous man he had ever seen. He was head and shoulders over Chris-

topher—and besides, he wore a crown. But Christopher was as broad of shoulder; and crowns meant little to him. He had understood that royalty and its crowns really do mean little; and he had refused all that by going away from Syria. So he looked the king manfully in the eyes. But he offered his services with respect, frankly giving his reason for acting as he did.

The king accepted him and made him a captain in his armies. Then he dismissed him in true Asiatic fashion, without much surprise.

So the new life began.

It would be too long to describe this life from the beginning. For it lasted many and many a long year. Christopher went to the king's wars, and sometimes was asked to the king's councils. And he had time to learn the language of his new country, and the habits of the people who lived in it.

The king was always a good master. He was so good and so strong, in fact, that Christopher thought at times that he had really found the earthly paradise that he had always longed for; and the journey across the mountain-range, and all the fighting that he did, seemed not too much to pay for finding that.

For, as time went by, he was more respected than some older men, in the council-chamber of the king. In war he was reckoned almost as good a captain as any. But he was better as a fighter than as a captain, for he had more physical strength than readiness of wit. But he was just, and frank in saying what he thought right; but never domineering or bitter. That was why the king and his councillors always sought Christopher's advice in difficult times.

Christopher was happy; but, as always in life, there was something unpleasant still in store for him. He was destined to be disappointed in his ideal. For he found that the king was not as brave as he was strong and considerate.

During the first years, Christopher noticed only that the king was a great general and that he delighted in battle—which was just what Christopher loved above all. Never had he noticed that the king was a coward, even against odds, which was a great characteristic. And the two had been on hard marches together, when the king underwent all the privations of the most ordinary of his soldiers.

But one day, after a victory, and when they

The Story of Saint Christopher

were preparing to march triumphantly home, Christopher received a visitor. It was a hot, silent noontide, and all the army was sleeping or resting. Christopher, alone in his tent, could hear only the stamping of the animals tethered without, or the clanking of a sentry on his rounds.

Suddenly, without a word of warning, the king entered. He had a nervous way that was unusual, and that seemed to come from trying to conceal a shiver that Christopher saw plainly, and the king's face was the color of clouded snow-fields.

"I shall stay with you for a while," said the king. And no other word did he speak as long as he stayed—which was above an hour. Christopher asked no questions.

Then this same thing happened again, and again, until Christopher could not count the times it happened. Generally it was not while they were on the march, but in the palace itself. At such times the king said never a word, or else very little. Christopher began to see that he was in deadly fear of something or of somebody. Finally, after a long while, the secret came out.

This time, it was late at night, and in the palace, where Christopher had been told to live. The king appeared, as before, pale and trembling. He rushed into Christopher's room like a madman. But he was no sooner there than he whirled on his heel suddenly, crying out: "Oh, there! There he is, at last!" And he fell groveling to the floor, in a fit of terror.

Christopher would have rushed to his assistance but for the fact that, just then, there appeared in the doorway a sight so extraordinary that mortal man has rarely seen the like. Christopher remained seated at the table where he had been studying—not at all because he was frightened, like the king, but because he was so interested that it never occurred to him to move.

There, in the doorway, was the cause of the king's fright for years and years. And it was the cause of all the fears of all men since the world began. For it was the Devil. Christopher knew him, just as everybody does who has once felt his influence, even without ever having seen him.

Christopher looked him straight in the eyes,

as was his custom. And the Devil looked just so at Christopher. For he had not much reason to fear men: he generally succeeded in making them do anything he told them. The Devil must have had an unusual experience, for most people can not look him in the face. It was not that Christopher was stronger than the Devil, any more than he was stronger than the king. But the Devil had no power over him, for he did not see a guilty conscience shining out in Christopher's eyes.

The newcomer looked like a man. But he had the great, batlike wings we have all read about, and he had a tail like a cowhide whip, with a brass arrowhead at the end. His face was the color of coke, and his features broad and pronounced. In general appearance he was more like an East Indian than like any other sort of man. But there was no danger of mistaking him, on account of his wings and his tail. In stature he was so tall that he would have had to stoop down in any other room than the one they were in.

As he and Christopher kept on looking at each other, the Devil—who had seemed very terrible and forbidding at first—began to smile



"Greetings!" said the Devil.



in a strange way that human beings do not have. That is a ruse of the Devil's: when he cannot scare a man, he tries to win him over by being pleasant. Christopher did not know this, and smiled too, just because he saw that the king was not hurt, and that the whole situation was ridiculous. But just the same, that would have been the most terrible moment of his life, if he had not been the honest, brave soul he was.

"Greetings!" said the Devil.

"Greetings!" said Christopher. "But what does all this mean?"

"I am the Devil," said the other, "and you ought to be afraid of me. The king is. And that is just what this means, since you ask."

"Why is the king afraid?"

"Well," said the Devil, "it seems that the king has an evil conscience. I always scare people who know they have done wrong. Of course, I ought to be their friend, I suppose, because I am very bad myself. But all the same, I hate them as much as I do good folk. And I scare them much more."

Christopher thought the Devil was an odd mixture of knowledge and of ignorance. But,

The Story of Saint Christopher

at the same time, he thought that the Devil was stronger than the king, or than anybody else he had ever seen. That was probably not quite the truth, but Christopher had never thought of anything beyond strength of body. The Devil seemed, of a truth, more than a match for any man.

Christopher got up, and went over to help his master the king. But he could do very little, as the king, after his fit, had gone off into a dead faint. Christopher was disgusted beyond words. Moreover, he was sad in his heart, for he saw that the Master in Asia was but a poor master to serve, after all. Just then an idea came into his head:

“Could I serve you?” he asked the Devil.

“Very much,” replied the fiend. “Do you wish to come with me?”

“I will go with you, and serve you, on one condition,” said Christopher, “and that is, that you will never trouble the king any more.”

The Devil made a wry face at this. But he quite well realized that he could not force Christopher. So he consented. After all, he did not lack worse people than the king to torment.

Christopher threw cold water in the king’s

face. When the monarch had revived enough, Christopher took leave of him, explaining how the Devil had just promised to occupy himself with other people, in future.

And the Devil and he went out of the palace together.

SATAN



Christopher had now done a most terrible thing, in offering to serve the enemy of men. And he would have paid a heavy price for it, if he had not been acting honestly, and if he had consented to commit all the crimes the Devil proposed to him afterwards. But Christopher put it to him squarely, saying that he was a soldier, and wished to serve the strongest of masters in that quality.

"And you must surely be the strongest of all," he concluded.

"I am," replied the Devil. And he lied in his throat, and enjoyed it like the hypocrite he always was, and is.

"You shall be one of my chief captains, along with my archfiends, and eat at my own table when we are on the march. I will give you one of my best regiments of fiends, and you need never pay any attention at all to the imps, who are beneath your notice. Are you satisfied?"

"Yes," said Christopher.

And thus began his service with the Devil. Like that with the king, it was to last many years, and before it was half over Christopher was no longer a young man.

As he grew older, strange, new ideas came to him. For example, he began to wonder why soldiers were permitted to do cruel things that other people ought not to do. Then, too, it occurred to him that physical strength was not what had made the king afraid of the Devil. Christopher himself was probably less strong than the Master in Asia. He certainly was no match for the Devil, and yet he had no fear of him. And so he came to see that physical strength was not everything—not even the principal thing in life.

He had many other thoughts like those. But we shall go on with the story, which will be much more interesting, because it will

The Story of Saint Christopher

show what Christopher's thoughts made him do.

People often say that the Devil overcomes us by his wiles; which is true, as far as it goes. But he uses force, too. And it was for that reason that he kept the great army of fiends in which Christopher became a captain. It was a sort of honor, after all, to belong to this army. For these fiends were nothing less than the angels who had rebelled with Satan, and whom Michael and the other good angels had driven out of Heaven. But the fiends were ashamed of that story, and so Christopher did not know, until long afterwards, that there is a stronger Being than the Devil.

Christopher never liked any of the fiends particularly. But he soon noticed that they were not all of them as bad as they are reported to be. A great many were sullen, and seemed to hate Satan rather than admire him. Almost all seemed to despair of ever finding an end of the anxiety and hardship of warfare.

No wise man has ever clearly told us just what the imps were. They were hideous little black creatures, with heads like beasts or like birds. But they resembled men, even with the feathers or fur or tails or claws or bat-wings

that they had. About all we know about them is that they had nothing to do with the fiends. And they certainly had nothing to do with men—unless it were to torment them. But we know that Satan commands them in everything, and that he uses them to tempt and to torture good people. The fiends you will never meet, unless you come out in the open, and offer to fight Satan. Then he will send a fiend—even an army of them if necessary—and you must be on your guard or they will treat you roughly. The imps generally appear when you think you are dreaming.

Christopher and his regiment of fiends were used when a whole nation had declared war on the Devil. It was not an easy life, to be in this regiment, since the Devil was often defeated. At such times, especially, Christopher and his companions got many a hard knock.

It goes without saying that Satan's kingdom is not on the surface of the earth, but away down in the center. Christopher, however, was never allowed to go there, although all the fiends returned to that region, from time to time, when Satan held his councils. But several of them were almost always roaming about the surface of the earth, like Chris-

The Story of Saint Christopher

topher. Generally their camp was in such terrible mountains as those he had passed through on his journey from Syria, when he went to find the Master in the East. But sometimes they rested, at night, on ships at sea; sometimes in the desert; sometimes they were in tropical lands where the stars shone like moons in the sky, and where strange animals roamed about in the rustling jungles. Sometimes they would stay on the house-roofs in great cities, or in abandoned houses.

For the fiends had to rest, and to eat and drink, just as Christopher did. And they were tired and hungry quite as often as he was, since they had to fly when the journeys were very long. Because Christopher could not fly, some of them had to carry him, heavy as he was.

Probably Christopher did a great deal of harm in those days. But at least he always acted bravely, and never did the underhanded, rascally deeds that were the business of the imps. Indeed, he never knew, until long after, what it was that they did. For Satan was quite sure that Christopher would have been ashamed to serve a low-minded master. And so he never breathed a word of the truth.

To Christopher, Satan was—except for his

strength and his odd appearance—very much like any other king who thinks that armies are the best protection against enemies, and who never understands that the best protection of all is never to make enemies. And it is true enough that the Devil was not much worse than some of the kings he fought.

Christopher was kept so busy the first years of his service that he had no time to think about any of these questions. And even when he had gained Satan's confidence, and had a chance to know him well, he noticed nothing that could lead him to think the Devil weak, or even particularly bad.

One hot noon-day, however, when the two were walking alone not far from a Christian city which they meant to attack, a strange thing happened. Christopher could not believe his eyes, and said to himself: "I almost think that this is my experience with the Master in Asia all over again."

For the Devil had just been taken with a fit of trembling, and had whirled around as if he had been hit in the face with a stone. And there he stood, with his back to the city, and his hands over his eyes, saying never a word. Christopher asked him what the matter was.

Finally Satan said: "Sit down with me on this rock. We will go nearer the city at night-fall."

So there they sat, with their faces turned away from the city. And so they stayed, all the long afternoon, as silent as the plain itself. The Devil's face was both sad and angry, in the red light of sunset.

When it was quite dark, Satan spoke at last: "Now we can go on to the city." So they went ahead on their scouting expedition, and planned to take and burn the town the day after the next. Then they returned to the mountains where the army of fiends was waiting, to organize the coming battle.

Christopher had never seen so many of them together. As far as the crest of the next mountain, their great forms stood out black against the moonlit snow. The captains said that there were still more beyond. And that was not all: tens of thousands of imps were among them, each with a three-pronged spear, and a great cowhide bag over his shoulder. These had been brought along, he was told, to carry away the booty from the many cities that lay beyond the one he had seen.

Then Satan unfolded his plan. "That land over yonder is a Christian land," he said; "and I am going to kill all its inhabitants, down to the very last. And I will burn the houses, and even the very ground, so that nobody can ever live there again! For I hate the Christians as my worst enemies!" At that point Satan could utter no further word, but fell to gnashing his teeth and lashing his tail, in pure rage. Christopher had never seen him in such a state, and admired him the less for it. But he said nothing.

Two days after that, the infernal army started for the city.

THE CITY OF THE CHRISTIANS



he expedition began very strangely. The whole army of fiends and imps, having received its orders, rose suddenly into the air. Never had Christopher, who was carried by six tall fiends, seen a sight, or heard a noise, like that. The air was black with them, just as the old histories tell us that it was black in Egypt when the locusts flew over the land, to desolate everything. Highest up, there was regiment upon regiment of fiends, and far below them, the imps. Around Christopher, there was a deep, whirring noise from countless wings, as the fiends flew steadily out over the mountain peaks, to the plain. But from the swarm of imps there

The City of the Christians

was a hubbub of shrieking voices and a deafening clatter of metallic bat-wings. For the imps did not have the strength or the discipline of the others. Yet somehow they came along all the same.

So the infernal army flew over the mountain tops and off into the plain, for many miles. But when the city began to show as a dim spot on the horizon, the buglers who took Satan's orders began to blow their harsh brass trumpets. Other buglers farther back took up the signal, until the sounds were lost in the distance, like an echo from opposing cliffs. Immediately, the wings stopped beating the air, and the whole army glided gently to the earth. Another signal, and they were marching across the sultry desert.

That was much harder and slower than flying, and Christopher did not quite understand why Satan should choose that way of making his approach to the city. But he had noticed several odd things recently—principally the Devil's strange conduct two days before, in that very plain. So he said nothing, but went ahead with his regiment, thinking what it all might mean.

His astonishment was still greater when they

came within a mile or so of the city. For there the Devil and his fiends halted, and legions of imps were sent forward, bearing fagots and oil and damp straw.

Meanwhile, every fiend in Satan's numberless regiments stood with bowed head. Christopher could not imagine what all this could mean. They were too far away to be reached by any missiles from the walls of the city. And as for fire, it seemed to him that fire should have been set to the city by the fiends themselves, and not by the contemptible imps. But he could not see any reason, even then, why damp straw should be used, for dry straw makes much better kindling. So they waited a long time. The imps were almost out of sight, showing only as a confused swarm over the yellow plain. Satan's head was bowed like those of his soldiers.

Suddenly little shafts of black smoke began to rise up here and there; then more. And then it seemed as though the whole plain between them and the city had taken fire at once. For a great cloud arose, hiding everything; and under it Christopher could see the red flames whirling and writhing.

Out of this midnight darkness came the

legions of imps, laughing and shrieking and beating their ugly wings against each other, reeling in the air like drunken insects, falling to the ground and rising again. They flew back over the fiends to the rear, and settled tumultuously into their place. The wind was blowing toward the city, and none of the smoke came towards them; but the city was invisible to them, just as if their eyes had been full of smoke.

Then the trumpets blew again, and Christopher was told that he was to attack in a certain direction. The fiends were to march right through the smoke, and over the blazing fagots—a thing that no man could do. But just then Satan strode up, and ordered the six fiends who had borne Christopher over the mountain to carry him to the city, a little later on, over the tops of the smoke-clouds. And Christopher heard the order that he gave them: “You will look downward—you will keep your eyes on the earth!” The infernal army was already entering the flames and smoke. Christopher’s six fiends rose with him into the air, and they sailed slowly toward the city walls, almost invisible even at that height. He could only catch a glimpse, from time to time, of the

The Story of Saint Christopher

church-towers. But all lower down was black.

When they came to the walls the fiends of Christopher's regiment were already battering away at them. He was set down just outside, and a few moments after, the walls fell, and he led his contingent into the city.

We need not say anything about the murderous battle that was waged inside. Satan killed a great many of the people, and made the rest prisoners. These were confided to the swarms of imps, who surrounded them and marched them out into the open plain beyond, to await the advance of the army. When all the fighting was over fire was set to every church, and then to the houses. Satan's army having no fear of fire, the fiends started everything burning at once, and stood by to see that nothing was left. In a few hours the beautiful city was blotted out. They even tore down the walls that remained, and leveled them until all were buried again in the earth. When the bugles sounded for their departure, you could not have told where the city had been, except that the ground there was blacker than the rest of the plain.

Christopher was ill at ease. Somehow or other, he could not help feeling that the victory

had been too easy, and that it was unfair and cowardly of so strong a being as the Devil to take such vengeance on poor human beings who only wanted to believe in their own god.

The Devil and Christopher were walking together as they usually did. Satan was much elated at his victory, and kept boasting about it, until Christopher grew nervous at hearing the harsh voice always rasping away in his ears.

"That was a great victory," said Satan, "and They will weep tonight in Heaven!"

"Who?" said Christopher, for all his life he had never heard Their names. His mother had had very good reasons for never mentioning Them. The king in the East, being an ignorant pagan, had never heard of Them. And as for the Devil, he had the best reasons in the world for never bringing Them into his conversation.

He saw that he had been stupid, as he so often is, and he could have bitten off his own tongue in rage, at the thought.

Satan was at a loss to reply to Christopher's question, but he knew that not to give an answer would make Christopher suspect that

The Story of Saint Christopher

there were stronger powers than the power of evil that he was. So he only said:

"Only two Christians who once lived in this country, and who were bold enough to say that they could conquer me. They were mad." But Christopher was not satisfied.

"What is Heaven?" he said.

"Oh, Heaven is only another city, to which they fled when they knew that I was coming here with my army," he replied. But he was none too well satisfied with his own answer, for he felt that Christopher knew he was lying. And Christopher had heard him do that so often that he was getting a bit tired of it. It did not seem right that the strongest being in the world should have to lie. Then too, Christopher could not forget what had passed two days before, in the plain, when Satan had veiled his face and turned away, awaiting nightfall to approach the city. Satan added:

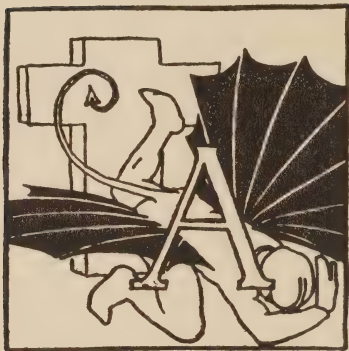
"One of these days we shall take Heaven."

"Did you ever try before?" asked Christopher, little knowing how his question would confuse Satan, who had been driven out of Heaven long ago by Michael and the other archangels.

This question was too much for the cruel

enemy of the Christians, who felt all his bragging spirit go, at the very remembrance of that terrible battle around the walls of Heaven. All his elation at the victory of that afternoon faded out of his face, and he became silent, plodding along as downcast and as weary as any of the prisoners they had taken. At first Christopher was inclined to be sorry for him. But then he thought how cruel he had been that day, and how he had felt, just now, that Satan was always lying. So he merely marched ahead in silence. Satan asked nothing better than to be silent. For he feared he would disclose his secret if they should talk further about Jesus and Mary, and about Heaven.

THE CROSS



ll that afternoon they marched across the plain. There was not a tree or a bush in this region, and the sun, beating down on the long black files, made them look the blacker, by contrast with the yellow sand. There was the deep rumbling sound of innumerable feet and the clanking of weapons. Sometimes a captive would scream under the torturing of the cruel imps. Or there would be the rustling of great leathern wings as Satan's orderlies flew up and down the lines to keep them in order. But no one spoke. It seemed almost more like a defeat than like a victory, for they all seemed ashamed and downcast, from Satan to the meanest of the imps.

Behind them the black smoke-cloud from the smoldering ruins of the city still lowered across the sky. The setting sun was half covered, now, by rain-clouds that were rising fast out of the west and driving toward the army before a high wind.

They were not far from the edge of the plain, now and the road they followed lost itself, a little way ahead, in a forest. Already, Christopher could see the tall trees bending in the wind, and the air was growing fresh with the smell of rain. Christopher thought:

"It will be good to reach the trees, and to rest there for the night." For Satan had said that the army was to camp that night in the forest.

Christopher was very tired, and longed to reach the wood-side. He did not know why this was so, for the work and the fighting of the day would have had no effect upon him at most times. He was so strong that he almost never felt fatigue. But so it was: the forest seemed to call to him, and to beckon with its swaying branches:

"Come, Christopher! Come to us, and this night you shall have rest such as you never had before!"

And his heart was filled with a great hope—greater than the one he had when he set out from his father's castle to seek the Master in the East.

Perhaps it was his disgust with Satan, and with all the cowardly, cruel acts the fiends and the imps had done that afternoon, that made him tired.

Satan seemed to think so, in any case; for Christopher could feel that his master—perhaps not his master for much longer—was looking at him slantwise, in an ugly, suspicious and uneasy way.

They were almost at the place where the road went into the forest. On one side—to the west of the road—there were a few thick trees that formed a little grove by themselves. A hundred yards beyond, and the road grew black in the shadows of the forest. The wind had driven the rain-clouds over them, now, and the first great drops were beginning to fall.

Satan and Christopher, at the head of the column, had just passed the trees that made the little grove they had seen, when, all of a sudden, a long, blinding flash of lightning came down, quivering and writhing across the sky.

It fell so near them that they heard the thunder roaring, like thousands upon thousands of great drums, even while the light was still burning in the sky.

And across the white road, right under Satan's cloven feet, there lay the black shadow of the Cross!

What happened then, Christopher could not well remember, it was all so sudden and unexpected. But he heard Satan's great, harsh voice screaming close beside him, and he heard the blaring of trumpets echoing down the endless ranks of the infernal host. Then there was the beating of countless wings, as the whole army—Satan, fiends, and imps—rose high into the air, and headed back toward the mountain, through the angry clouds.

Away back, toward the rear, where the imps had been, he could see the poor Christian captives huddled along the road. The lightning and the thunder ceased, and near him, standing by the little grove, there seemed to be nobody left. But some one was there—some one he had not seen.

"Back, Satan! Back! For you are accursed!" cried a voice.

Christopher looked about him, and saw an

old man who was standing, with head thrown back and one hand raised above his head, at the base of an immense cross. It was the shadow of this cross that they had seen, just now, in the lightning; but because it stood a little beyond the grove, the infernal army had marched up to it without knowing that it was there.

All at once, Christopher understood all that had happened in the last few days: why the Devil had turned away in the plain, and waited for nightfall before approaching the city; and why, that morning, he had ordered the imps to make clouds of smoke when they were nearing the city. It was out of fear of the cross that was on the roof of the cathedral. And just now all those evil spirits had fled in terror because they had come too near the Christian emblem. We all know that Satan and his minions cannot bear the sight of the cross; but Christopher had never been told, and so had had to find it out for himself, as he had just done.

But knowing the fact, and understanding why it should be so, were two different things. For Christopher had never feared anything, since his heart was pure.



"I am not Satan," said Christopher.

So he only looked at the great cross, and at the old man who stood beneath it, wondering.

"Back, Satan, back," repeated the old man. Christopher thought that, for one so frail and worn by years, he somehow looked very strong and fearless. And in the flashing eyes that were turned upon him he felt a sort of accusation.

We must not forget that Christopher was a pagan, and a soldier by profession, and had never been told that it was wrong to fight as a soldier, whether the cause were good or bad. He was now to learn that soldiering is good and right only when one fights for a good cause, and that helping Satan to destroy the Christians had been a very bad thing to do.

"I am not Satan. He has just run away with his army, frightened by something. Who are you?" said Christopher.

"I am the bishop of yonder city that you have just sacked and burned," returned the old man. "And I tell you that if my strength had equaled my will, I should have been in that city, to drive you out, or else to die with my poor, murdered flock!"

Christopher felt sorry for this brave old

The Story of Saint Christopher

priest, whose voice was choked for a little while by his sorrow.

"I saw smoke rising from the plain this morning," the bishop went on, "but I was far away, at a shrine where I had gone on a pilgrimage. And though I hastened as best I could, a faintness came upon me at this spot. I thought that my Master was calling me back to Him, and I embraced the cross, not thinking that I should ever rise again. But my Master willed it otherwise. Now carry me down the road upon your shoulders, for I must go to help my poor suffering children who are there; and today I can walk no farther."

Something in the look and the voice of the bishop made Christopher obey, though he might have killed him, an hour or two before. So he took him on his shoulders, and set him down among the weeping crowd that had so lately been Satan's captives.

The old man went among them with words of comfort, and Christopher could see that the stoutest-hearted among them leaned upon this frail being as upon a strong staff.

He knew from all that had just happened, that all his life he had been on the wrong track. The Master whom the bishop had mentioned

was surely stronger than all others, although He did not show it by using physical force.

When the Christians had set up their camp for the night, the bishop turned to Christopher and said:

"You have led an evil life, my son, since you have been the servant of the Devil. But I would not see you lose your chances of salvation. My Master will pardon all your sins, if you will serve Him faithfully all the rest of your life. On the other side of the forest there is a great river, and on the other bank of the river there is a shrine where Christians go to worship. But because the river is swift and treacherous, many have lost their lives at the ford. Go there and build yourself a hut on the river-bank; and when the pilgrims come, take them upon your shoulders and carry them safely across."

"I will gladly go; and I will do as you tell me," answered Christopher. "But first I would see the Master I am to serve, and speak with Him."

"The time is not yet come when you can know Him," said the bishop. "Many and many a year must go by, I fear, before you can hope that He will turn his face upon you or let you

The Story of Saint Christopher

hear the words of His mouth. First you must gain credit by faithful service, and after that He will come to you. For He is gentle and full of pity, but He will have no faithless servants. Now go to the river. Sometimes I will send one of my priests to see what kind of service you render. Go in peace!"

And as the bishop blessed him with the sign of the cross, Christopher turned away, and was soon lost to sight in the rain and falling shadow.

THE MASTER



he river was at the very edge of the forest. On the other side was the Christian shrine, and behind it steep mountains rose up and up, so high that the clouds veiled their glittering, snowy peaks. The river came from somewhere in this mountain range and rushed swirling and thundering among the great boulders it had carried down from the highlands, with fountains of spray and eddying flecks of foam. Christopher first came upon it in the dull light of a rain-swept morning. Miles back in the forest he had heard the roar and thunder of it, echoing and reëchoing among the trees.

"This, indeed, will be hard service," he

The Story of Saint Christopher

thought. "But I will do it faithfully, so that I may be allowed to see my Master."

Then he cut himself a sapling for a staff, and crossed and recrossed the river many times, so that he could choose the safest passage when the pilgrims should come. In many places it was terribly hard, even for him, to keep a footing; he did not wonder that many lives had been lost, even when the pilgrims crossed in groups, and with the aid of ropes.

After that, he built himself a hut of withes between the forest and the river, and began the task that the old bishop had set for him.

Some would have it that he always judged the travelers who wished to pass the ford, and that if he thought they were not earnestly bent upon the service of the Master, he would turn them back, refusing to take them through the torrent. But the good and simple folk who seemed truly to love their Master, just as he would have done if he could only have known Him, these he would carry over to the other bank, to the shrine. But those who seemed haughty and rich, who loved themselves above all else, and who acted as though they were conferring a favor on the Master by visiting His shrine, these he would send back, saying



He would send the haughty ones back.

The Master

that he had slain thousands such as they, and counted them no more than vermin. This he did that they might learn the lesson of humility, and know that even on earth they might find judges.

But he would not have killed them, for he reflected that if he had died in the service of the giant king or of Satan, he could never have been sure that there must be a greater Master than they, and One whom everybody may hope to know at last. He thought that those haughty people could learn only through trouble and humiliation that there is good in the world, as well as evil, and that the Power of good must be stronger than all the armies of Satan.

And so he lived a long time by the ford. He helped many good people, both high and low, who went to pay their homage at the shrine. Some of them, seeing that he was mild and honest, would talk with him about the Master. They understood that he had seen many lands and gone on strange adventures. But they felt that he was sad at heart. To some he even said he was, indeed, a servant; but that he was of so low degree, and so unworthy, that the Master would not allow him to look

The Story of Saint Christopher

upon His face, nor hear the words of His mouth. And Christopher would add:

“I do not know the Master I serve. Perhaps some day it may be permitted to me.”

But he could not pray, even though he could serve; for he thought that if his work would not avail, then neither would his prayers. He did not rightly understand, as yet, that prayer is good and right for those who have faith enough, but that he was waiting for a sign or a word from the Master, when all the time he ought to have been content to go without. For already he had ample proof and certainty that the Master was watching over him.

So he toiled on, from day to day, and from month to month, until he had been there years long. He learned that his great strength was nothing at all beside the faith of the pilgrims, for they were happy in their faith, whereas his strength served only to help them on toward the shrine, so that they might pray there.

He saw more and more clearly that he had never really cared to be strong of body, nor to serve powerful lords such as Satan, or the King in Asia. He had only been seeking some one better than himself, because his heart had been empty within him, and he had been striv-

ing to have a faith. But now, he had been through so much, he had been so evil in not trying to understand the world rightly, that he could not pray, nor even think how men really get faith. One thing was certain: his strength was no more than a straw or a blown leaf—or even less than that. He did not care any more that his Master should be mighty in arms. All he wished for was to know Him, and to be sure that He was the best of all masters.

When he had come to think about it in this way he was sorry that he had judged the pilgrims; and thereafter he would carry the proud and careless as well as the others. This he did, in order that they might pray at the shrine, if they would, and so have a chance to get the faith that he would so much have liked to have.

Unknown to Christopher, the emissary of the bishop would pass, from time to time, and speak with him. This emissary was a priest not yet past middle life, but he was wise in the care of souls, and put his questions in the guise of a few simple words such as any pilgrim might use, in thanking Christopher for his service at the ford.

The Story of Saint Christopher

The first time, on returning to the bishop, he said: "That man is full of ardor to serve. But he is rough and fierce, and more like a soldier than a carrier of burdens." The second time, he said: "He has become sad at heart, but he is more mild." And the third time: "I fear that he will be broken on the cross you gave him, for he is no longer the same fierce, ready man. But he is humble, like a slave, and so sad that it is pity to look upon him. He says little, and will not complain nor pray."

But this time the bishop prayed with all his might that favor might be shown to Christopher. For he knew that the Master would forgive, and that the miracle of understanding might now be accorded Christopher, so that his soul should not die, but live in the faith so well earned.

It was late afternoon when the priest returned to the bishop with his account of Christopher. And it was toward evening that the bishop prayed that the Master would give some sign whereby His servant might receive faith and grace.

That night a heavy storm drove down from the mountains, and rushed across the river, the forest, and the plain. Even as the bishop

was praying, he could hear the angry wind humming and whining around the cross that guarded his new cathedral. But he finished his earnest prayer, and then rose, smiling. He said to himself:

"I think that Satan is roaring in the air to-night, and seeking what he may destroy in our city. For surely the Master will grant my prayer. If he does, then Satan will lose another precious soul."

The winds blew from sunset on, fiercer and louder; and shortly there came a rain such as no one had ever seen. It seemed as though it did not fall in drops, but in solid sheets, splashing and streaming around Christopher's hut as though the river itself were flowing high out of its banks.

Christopher could not sleep, for the noise of it, but sat in his shelter listening to the roar of the thunder as it echoed and reëchoed from the mountain chain, and watching the long white flashes of lightning between the woven rushes of his roof and walls. In all his wanderings about the world he had never known a night like this.

"I do not think that any pilgrims will come tonight," he thought. "Only Satan himself,

The Story of Saint Christopher

or some one stronger even than he, could stay abroad in such foul weather."

But he could not sleep, even when he became used to the noise, and when he knew quite well that no man would come to ask his aid to cross the river. Perhaps it was the excitement due to the storm, or he knew not what; but strange new ideas began to run through his head, and, in spite of the desolation of the moaning wind and the sob of the waters, he felt that there was a hope, and a brightness, near, that he had never known.

So he sat there, staring into nothing, his ears half deafened by the peals of thunder, and weary from his toilsome day. For it was the season when the Christians came in crowds to the shrine. And that day he had carried many across the ford.

But all the time his heart grew lighter and lighter. Something was about to happen.

Instead of lessening, the thunder and the lightning became always more loud and more vivid. The river began to rise, as Christopher could tell from the mad rush of water outside, and from the roar of the mountain wind. Hours long he sat thus, thinking and listening. It was only an hour before morning.

"Christopher, Christopher!" All at once he seemed to hear a voice, crying his name in the tempest outside. He must have been half asleep, for the words seemed to come distinctly to him, and yet he was not sure that he had not dreamed.

He went to the door of his hut and looked out: Nothing! Nobody could be abroad at such a time, he thought. He must have been dreaming. So he went back to his pallet, and sat down again.

"Christopher, Christopher!" cried a voice. "Come out!"

So he went to his door again, and peered out, long and anxiously. For surely, this time, he had heard a voice calling him. He even walked out a few paces, into the storm, and looked toward the stream and toward the forest, but in vain. Nobody was to be seen.

"Surely this must be some pilgrim calling me," he thought. "But I can see nobody; perhaps I dreamed it, after all!" And after looking about awhile, he came back into his hut, thinking that it was all an illusion. And so he sat there awhile, confused by his weariness and by the storm, and the words he thought he had heard.

The Story of Saint Christopher

"Christopher, Christopher! Come out and bear me across the river, for I would go to the shrine, and afterwards I have a long journey ahead, this night. Come out, and bear me across the river!"

This time, there could be no doubt. Some one was calling him. So he went to the door a third time. But there was no one there. Stare as he would through the driving rain and the blinding lightning, he could see no human being anywhere.

"But there must be somebody," he thought. "I will look anyway, until I see him."

And so he stood outside his door, staring into the night, sure that he would find the pilgrim at last. He looked and looked: nobody was there. But he was not discouraged, for he had faith at last, even though it were only the faith that some one had called to him.

Then, as he was staring into the storm, a strange thing happened. All at once, he thought that he saw a figure standing, a little way off. At first he was not sure, for it was a tiny figure, and he had expected that on such a night there could be only strong men abroad. But as he looked, the figure became more clearly outlined. At last, in a long flash of

lightning, he was sure. A child, almost a baby, was standing there! It must have been this child that had called him.

He went forward, into the driving rain, a rod or so. And there, sure enough, smiling and motionless in the storm, stood a child.

"Take me quickly across the river," he said, "for I have a long journey to go this night, and first I would visit the shrine of our Master."

So Christopher knelt, and took him upon his shoulders, and strode out into the river.

"This is only a little child," he thought. "But I have vowed that I would carry everyone across, and in whatever weather. So I will carry the child across, though it cost me my poor life."

But then he thought that if he failed, the child, too, would be carried away in the torrent. And so he said:

"Child, I will carry you if I can. But the river is running high, and I much fear me that even with your little body on my shoulders, I may not come through tonight. For your own sake, and not for mine, I counsel you to await the morning. For there is great danger."

The Story of Saint Christopher

But the child only answered:

“Hurry, Christopher, and carry me through the torrent. For if you are stout of heart and strong in your faith, then you will be able to carry me across.”

And so they set out.

Never had Christopher crossed the river in such a flood. At nightfall, when he had carried a belated pilgrim to the shrine, the river was already running high, and he had found it hard enough to get to the other bank. But now, with the rain and the wind from the mountain, the river was like another tempest. It ran so fast that the great rocks, which generally rose high above the surface of the water, showed only as foaming eddies where the current gnawed away at their submerged crests. Once or twice, even, Christopher thought he heard a dull rumble, as of one of these boulders rolling heavily out of its place under the force of the waters. And just as he was entering the river on his perilous mission, a huge mass like a ship rushed past him and disappeared in the darkness, creaking and moaning under the wind, and flinging up jets of foam and spray. It was a great tree, torn up, roots and all, from the forest edge.



Christopher seemed to be carrying the world on his back.

Christopher went slowly indeed, this time. For not only was the current almost irresistible, but the rushing waters had changed the river-bed so much, in those few hours, that he could hardly find his way. Where it had been shallow, it was deep, and where the rocks had given him a good footing, now there was only moving sand or slime.

He was so long in crossing that by the time he was only three-quarters of the way across, the gray, sunless day was already breaking through the rain.

Did he only imagine it, because of his weariness, or was it really true that the child grew heavier and heavier upon his shoulder? It seemed to Christopher, struggling along in the swift, treacherous waters, that he was bearing all the world upon his back.

"Child," he said, "I much wonder who or what you may be, for surely you are so heavy upon me that I doubt if I can come to the other bank."

"Doubt nothing, Christopher, but go steadfastly on. Though you are carrying the weight of the whole world, still, if you have faith, you shall come through. When we get to the bank I will tell you who I am."

The Story of Saint Christopher

The struggle seemed almost too much for Christopher, and sometimes he had to pause, bracing himself against the current with his great staff, which bent almost to breaking under the stress.

He looked up at the child, whose face, now that he could see it more clearly in the morning light, seemed more calm and beautiful than any human face. And the child was smiling upon him.

A rod to go yet, then a yard. And at last, with a last, splendid effort, Christopher braced himself against his bending staff, and sprang out of the torrent, to the river-bank.

"Plant your staff firmly in the ground," said the child. "And afterwards, listen to what I have to tell you."

Christopher did as the child had bidden him. Then he turned about to listen.

"You have sought long for a Master, Christopher. And you have been sad and your soul has hungered after the truth, for many a long year, now. You shall have your reward, for you have been a good and faithful servant. It is your misfortune, and not your sin, that you would not pray. Perhaps, if you had prayed, I might have come to you before. But

The Master

you have served Me well, and this night I have made hard trial of your strength and your humility. Only the strong and the humble may serve Me. I am your Master, whom you have sought so long. Shortly I shall give you the martyr's crown; and afterwards I shall call you to Me, to live near Me, among the blessed."

And, with a sign of benediction, the Child faded from sight.

As if by magic, at the same instant the sullen rain-clouds broke away from the east. And turning, Christopher beheld, in the glorious mazes of a rainbow, his staff, flowering into great white lilies and trembling green leaves. It was the sign of the Master!

Then Christopher could pray, with a full and joyous heart, for he knew that his long quest had come to an end.

* * * * *

Not long thereafter, Christopher gained the promised crown of martyrdom. And then he rose, joyously, to the eternal service of his Master.

WHAT PEOPLE HAVE THOUGHT OF SAINT CHRISTOPHER



he story of Saint Christopher has to be built up, after all these centuries, from many different stories. Not one of them is quite like any of the others. Some of them say that he came from Syria, while others give Arabia as the place where he was born. His very race is uncertain. But all the old writers agree that he was from one of the lands that lie between the Mediterranean Sea and Persia.

Some say that Christopher does not have his place in history, but in legend. They think in this way about him because all of the accounts of him were written long after he died, and also

Saint Christopher

because there are so many things in these accounts that are hard to believe.

But there is a good saying, "Where there is smoke there is fire." Christopher may not have been just what we imagine he was; but sometime, somewhere, there must have lived a man whose character and adventures suggested the stories that were told long ago of a man who came to be called Saint Christopher.

At first, though, this man was not called a saint, but a martyr. He had suffered death for the Christian religion. But not all who have done that have been canonized so as to have the official Church title of Saint. Christopher, so far as we know, was never even beatified. If he had been, he would have been called The Blessed, which is a title given to some good people who are not thought quite as important as those who have been called Saints. But sometime in the five hundreds—around 550 probably—the story of Christopher was well known in Greece and the Levant. It was never told twice in exactly the same way; yet there is no mistaking it, for Christopher's character always stood out in it and his name was given to it. Three centuries later, the story had gotten into the lands to the West and had

The Story of Saint Christopher

spread far and wide in France. And even in the earlier time when the Greeks and Levantines were writing it down some people in the West had heard it and dedicated churches to Saint Christopher. And so, by popular consent, whether in Greece, the Levant, Russia, or western Europe, he has for many centuries been given the title of Saint. He has his place in the calendar, people are named after him, and his feast is celebrated on July 25th.

Some people believe that he was really a giant, and in certain old stories his height is given as twice that of an ordinary man, or even more. But others think that the idea that he was a giant came from a place in one of the lives of him where it was written that he was a "great martyr." In the language in which that life was written "great" might mean "huge," and so people got the idea that he was a giant, when the writer of the life may not have meant to say that.

We do not need to believe that he was twice as tall as other men. At the same time, we can easily admit that, since people may sometimes be seen who are of gigantic stature, Christopher may have been so too. Probably he was,

Saint Christopher

for one old story says that before his conversion to Christianity Christopher was not really a man at all, but an ogre with the face of a dog. Dog-faced creatures with human form were believed in, far and wide, in olden times, and they were described in the books that were written then as very fierce and very large and strong. Christopher is not generally pictured as dog-faced, but only as large and strong.

His very name suggested strength, at least to those who used the Greek language. For the Greek word *pherein* means "to carry," while *Christos*, of course, means "Christ." So they left off the ends of the words, as people are accustomed to do when they combine them into one, and said "*Christo-fer*"—or "Christopher"—to mean "The Christ-Carrier." That really signified very great strength indeed, for to all who believe in Christ He symbolizes the weight of the world. The man who can carry Christ must seem ever huger and stronger than Atlas or Hercules, who, in the mythologies, held up the sky upon their shoulders.

Some people like to take the stories of the saints in their literal sense, while others are always looking through the acts that are de-

scribed, finding beyond some parable or allegory. To those, the river through which Christopher carried the pilgrims was not a real river, but the symbol of the waters of trouble through which all people have to go in this life. Some think that the Red Sea was meant. And the Red Sea, through which Moses led the Children of Israel out of Egypt, was itself a symbol of gaining salvation. The river through which Christopher waded with the pilgrims was like the Red Sea because the pilgrims he carried were going to the shrine where they could offer up their prayers for salvation. And his last crossing, with Jesus on his shoulder, was much like Moses' crossing of the Red Sea, because it was, or seemed to be, a miracle.

But most people who heard or read the story of Christopher understood it in a real sense: they believed that he had taken up the work of going through dangerous waters, and that he knew how to do so better than others. Thus we find that mariners and ferrymen adopted him as their patron saint. The story of the flood and storm was believed too, for all along the Rhine and the Danube, where the water rises dangerously at certain times, Saint Christopher was particularly held in veneration. It

Saint Christopher

was as though people felt that he could keep the water between its banks just as he could cross it safely when none other could. At Venice, too, Christopher was revered; for there great storms might drive the sea far in among the streets of water and do damage to buildings and harm people.

Making statues has always been a favorite way of honoring saints and others who did great things during life. This was what Christopher's admirers did, the length and breadth of Europe, but particularly in regions where there were rivers, or the sea, or some other peril. His statue was often placed on bridges, or near them. It was as if people thought that because Christopher had carried pilgrims over the water on his own shoulders he was himself a sort of bridge. He was that, and even more: for if he could carry all the weight of the world, as that was represented by Jesus, of course he was stronger than any bridge.

For centuries people had feared the rushing spring torrents as they made their way over the muddy paths that were generally the only roads in Europe, except the great stone ones that had been left by the Romans. These paths, marked out dimly by the inhabitants of each

The Story of Saint Christopher

little countryside, and zigzagging aimlessly over the wide land, always led to some ford whenever there was a river to be crossed. But what is a ford in one season—as for example in the heat of summer—may be a death-trap in the spring or winter. And so merchants, pilgrims, and all wayfarers had their thoughts on the dangers of fords more than on any other peril of travel, excepting only the brigands who might always be met with—like the fiends of the story of Christopher—in any noontide plain or at the edge of any wood.

Rich people, when they came to die, would leave money to be used for the building of bridges. Even those who were not really rich would often bequeath what they thought they could for this same purpose; in their wills they would write that they were doing this “for the good of their souls.” They thought that it was a service to their fellow men which God would look upon with favor and that, remembering it, He would pardon them the sins that might have been counted against them and have kept them out of Paradise. There was even an order of good men who made it their particular task to go about Europe building bridges in places where they were badly needed

Saint Christopher

and where the inhabitants did not have the money to build them. The Pope himself was, and is, called the "Pontifex Maximus," or the "Chief Bridge-BUILDER." That was no doubt a symbolic title by the time the Middle Ages came along, and meant rather that the Pope showed the way from this world to the next than that he was actually supposed to build bridges of stone over rivers. But that made no difference: men had their minds on rivers and on bridges in the times when the story of Saint Christopher was being spread from country to country. Perhaps this was partly because the ancient title of the Pope made them think about bridges. But it was also, we may be quite sure, because rivers were dangerous then, as they are now, and because more and more bridges were needed if the people of different lands were ever to know each other and if civilization was to advance and allow them to prosper by trading peacefully with each other.

Christopher's statue, then, was set up on bridges. It seems now that this must have been because men remembered that he was the saint who had the victory over the swiftest and most perilous of rivers. If his statue were placed

The Story of Saint Christopher

upon a bridge, that might call Christopher's attention to it and so preserve it.

Some of these statues to Saint Christopher were very large—far larger than it was the custom to carve statues. This was not because people were simple enough to think that Christopher's eye, from his place in Paradise, would be caught more readily by a huge statue than by a small one. People render homage as they can, and, if they are not rich enough to build a great statue, a tiny image set in the niche of a wall will express their feelings just as well and gain them just as much credit.

There was another reason why the statues to Saint Christopher were made larger than those of other saints. And the reason was not that Christopher was said to have been a giant while he was on earth. It may have seemed appropriate to make such statues for him, so as to represent his gigantic size more truly. But some of the statues to Christopher, whether on bridges or elsewhere—for they were not always on bridges—were as much as thirty-six feet high. It would have been possible to suggest the idea that he was a giant without going to the expense of making such mammoth statues as that.

Saint Christopher

Christopher had helped those who were less strong than himself, and so people had come to feel that he was the protector of the weak. He would preserve all who revered him from harm, it was thought, and they made up this Latin rhyme about it:

Christophori Sancti speciem quicumque tuetur
Illo namque die nullo languore tenetur.

And this they would sometimes carve beneath his pictures or statues. It means, "Whoever looks upon Saint Christopher, that day he shall not fail," and it was thought that this applied particularly to travelers and to those who were ill.

People liked to take things literally then, as they do now. If it was told them that they must look at the face of Christopher they thought that that meant really to see him, or his statue, and not only to think of him and pray to him. Therefore the pious people who spent their money to erect the statues thought that they would spend it best by making the statues huge, so that they might be seen even at great distances and by as many people as possible.

In earlier times it had been understood that

The Story of Saint Christopher

Christopher gained salvation because he had looked toward Christ spiritually and had borne Him always with him in his heart—even though he did not know Him until near the end of his life on earth. But when the story was written down men thought that it was meant literally and chose to believe that Christopher had borne Christ upon his shoulders as well as in his heart. And, of course, along with that, they would choose to think that they must look at the physical form of Christopher as it was represented in the statues as well as think of him, if they were to be saved from disease and the perils of the road and river.

Some of the great statues to Saint Christopher were at Auxerre, at Erfurt, and at Paris. This last one was placed in front of the Cathedral of Notre-Dame about the year 1400 and stood there—the largest image in all France—until about the French Revolution. Some say that it was taken down a few years before that terrible time. It was not quite upon a bridge, but very near one. For the Cathedral of Notre-Dame stands upon an island, and the foundations of the great building rest, themselves, upon piles that go down into the water in some places. And so,

Saint Christopher

even in front of this church, the statue of Christopher was almost as much of a river statue as though it had been placed squarely upon a bridge.

Sometimes they did not make statues of Christopher, but pictures instead. And these too were generally huge. The artist Pollaiuolo painted one on the front of a church in Florence full twenty feet high; but this has faded away with the years. In the city of Seville another picture of Christopher was made that was thirty-two feet from top to bottom. Sometimes, again, Christopher would be carved in bas-relief in stone. And sometimes, probably because he had been a soldier and continued to be a protector, they would put up an image to him over the portcullis and drawbridge of the gate of a city. That was done at Basel, in Switzerland.

Near the city of Cassel, in the palace gardens, some one of great wealth had once erected a huge likeness of Hercules. Hercules was represented in the mythological pictures of ancient times with a club in his hand, and so this statue also had a club. This club was mistaken by people for the sapling which Christopher used in fording the river when he

carried the pilgrims over to the shrine. The club in the hand of the colossus at Cassel was so large, it is said, that three people could get into the hollow that was inside. Very soon almost everybody forgot that this statue had been intended to represent Hercules. It was so huge, people thought, that it must be that of Saint Christopher. And from then on the statue was called by no other name than that of Saint Christopher. It shows that we are inclined to think of everything in our own terms. People knew Christopher better than they did Hercules, and they liked him better. And so they took this statue, in a way, and gave it to their chosen saint. They had done that centuries before with the pagan temples, putting out the old altar fires that had burned there, consecrating new altars, and singing the Christian mass where the pagan priests had once chanted.

Saint Christopher has given his name, too, to many of the places that are indicated on maps. Often these are by the sea or other waters, and it is easy to understand why. There is a mountain near Granada which has been given the name of Saint Christopher because, it is said, this mountain is the first

spot of land that is sighted by ships arriving from Africa. So the mariners thought of it as a sort of guardian, or at least as a sight that gave them hope and courage, and they called it after Christopher. In the West Indies, too, there is an island that must have meant good luck and safety to some sailor, for now it is called "Saint Kitt's"—which is only an affectionate and familiar way of saying "Saint Christopher's." People have that way, sometimes, of being familiar with those for whom they have a feeling of reverence, and just for the very reason that they feel affectionate toward them. No one who is wise at all, and least of all such a character as Christopher must have been, could be offended at this, or call it by the name of "familiarity."

The Christian artists who made the churches, the statues, the paintings, and the great stained-glass windows of the Middle Ages used to represent each saint in such a way that he could be recognized even if his name were not given. One was always represented as an old man holding a book; another would be a young man; another, again, would have with him a dog or other animal. Always there was something to show to those who

cared for the saints just which of them was represented. Christopher had several emblems. One was Christ Himself, not as He was when He ate for the last time with the apostles, but in the form in which He appeared to Christopher at the ford so as to test his obedience, humility, and faith the better by seeming to be a little child. Another of Christopher's emblems was the staff that he had cut for himself to help him on his perilous journeys over the ford. Also the artists would show, somewhere near the form of Christopher, the tree into which Christ caused this same staff to grow as a sign to Christopher that at last he had found his true Master.

The flowering staff is connected with other saints besides, although it is not used as their particular symbol, as is the case with Christopher. It is said that the staff that was used by that lovable friend of men and beasts and flowers, Saint Francis of Assisi, grew into a great oak when the saint no longer needed it to help him on his journeys. The staff of Saint Gregory, too, put out branches, and the one that was used by Saint Boniface grew leaves while he was consecrating a new church. Much the same story is told of Saint Bernard's staff.

And in the city of Smyrna, in the Levant, they used to point out a cherry-tree that was nothing but Saint Polycarp's staff come to life again.

Men have always liked these stories. In the first place they are beautiful and inspiring, whether they are taken as symbols or as the real, literal truth. They are particularly beautiful when they are told of the saints, whose mission it has been to inspire and encourage men by giving them signs and proofs of what is true, so that they will not need to continue in darkness. There is less inspiration in our story as it was sometimes told by the old Greeks. They said that the great club that was carried by Hercules—the same that is represented in the statue of the palace gardens near Cassel—became an olive tree. But this can hardly mean very much to us, for we always think of Hercules merely as a colossal being who had strange adventures in the land of myth, but who made no progress, remaining always what he was at first. He was a giant, they said; but he never became something better than that, as Christopher did.

Some people believe that another reason why the story of the staff was so much liked was

The Story of Saint Christopher

the passage in the Bible which runs: "Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me." That passage seems to mean only that the Lord punishes people sometimes with His rod and then again helps them along with His staff, and that both the punishments and the help are good for us and are appreciated by us. But in olden times men liked to stick to the literal sense of words, and the story of the staff meant even more to them because a staff was mentioned in that passage.

It is interesting to see how those who followed certain trades adopted Christopher as their patron saint. It is easy to understand why the ferrymen and the mariners of the high seas did so. For the great moment of Christopher's life was connected with a river or a sea—men never could decide exactly which. Because he had proved himself stronger than the waters he might well be expected to be able to protect those who traveled over seas and rivers.

The craft of the gardeners, too, held Christopher in special veneration. That, we may be quite sure, was because of the flowering staff. A gardener would like the saint whose faith and patience caused Christ to perform this

miracle for him, and would expect his own plants to flourish better if they were placed under the special protection of Christopher. Yet Christopher was not a gardener, but a soldier and a carrier at a ford. So the gardeners' reason for venerating him was of a different kind from that of the ferrymen who invoked him because he had labored at their own trade. No doubt it was the fact that the artists pictured the growing tree along with the form of Christopher that called the attention of the gardeners to him and made them think that he would be their best patron.

There was still another trade that held Christopher in special veneration. And at first one might wonder why they did not choose almost any other saint as their patron. This trade was that of the bookbinders. Probably, if there was anything that Christopher cared less for than anything else, this was books. Books do not go with him at all. He was an earnest seeker after the truth; but he was one of those who cannot get at the truth from being told about it or reading about it. He had to get at it through experience. Besides, being a giant, a soldier, and an adventurer generally, he was supposed never to have

spent much time with books. Indeed, he probably never read a single one.

Yet the bookbinders did choose him as their patron saint, for all that. Perhaps we shall never know just why they did so, but there is an explanation that may be the right one. In the distant past the people of the north of Europe, such as the English, the Dutch, and the Germans, had the habit of making writing tablets out of wood. Later on, when they collected manuscripts and, finally, printed works, they would bind these between wooden covers. In all those countries birch wood seems to have been preferred. And the reason why we think that this was so is that in the languages that were spoken there the word for birch was *buch*, or *bok*. And it is from that word, so scholars say, that we get our word "book." Now the tree that was one of the symbols of Saint Christopher was surely not a birch. But it was a tree for all that, and when the bookbinders saw it in pictures and in carvings they probably said to themselves: "Here is a saint who has a tree for his symbol. We use wood in our trade, and the very name of what we bind into volumes comes from the name of a tree. We will take this saint as our patron!"

Saint Christopher

In one thing, at least, the saints are like others who have lived in this world: they sometimes come to stand for things that never occupied them very much while they were on earth.

Everywhere they dedicated churches to Saint Christopher. As early as 532, it is said, there was at least one church in France that bore his name. And that was at the time when his story was being told and written in the Levant more than it was in the western countries.

In England he was less known than in the East and on the continent of Europe, for only four churches were dedicated to him there. No doubt that was because England was farther from the place where the story was first told. It was cut off from the rest of Europe far more in the early times when the story of Christopher was spreading than it is today. Later on, it is true, in the thirteenth century, the English knew Europe very well. For they had gone over to France as invaders just as the Normans had come to Hastings under William the Conqueror two hundred years before to put England under their rule. In the same way the English set up their rule over a large part of France in the thirteenth century. At

The Story of Saint Christopher

this distance of time it seems that they might all have done very well to stay at home and let each other live in peace. But even Saint Christopher was unwise enough to believe in war until he had a chance to learn that there is a better way to spend one's time.

Sometimes travelers in the Levant thought that they had found relics of Christopher, and then they would bring them back to their own countries. There a shrine would be made for these relics so that the attention of visitors might be called to them and fitting reverence be paid. There were such shrines of Saint Christopher in Astorga, in Compostella, and in Valencia in Spain; and formerly the great church of Saint Denis near Paris, where there were many holy relics and where the kings of France were buried, had also its relic of Saint Christopher. But it is no longer there.

Christopher was not the patron saint of artisans only. Sometimes whole governments would decide that he was their best protector. This was so with the states of Mecklenburg, Baden, and Brunswick, which all adopted him as their patron. Perhaps that was because Christopher had been a soldier, for governments have often thought that their best pro-

Saint Christopher

tection lay in weapons and in men to use them. Sometimes Christopher's picture would be chosen to stamp into coins, probably because he was popular with the people and those who made the coins thought that Christopher-coins would be especially well liked. Besides, the owners of these coins could look at Christopher every day. These were struck in Bohemia and in other parts of central Europe, and they may still be seen in museums.

Christopher came to be so much loved that people believed he was the best saint to ask for help against many ills and dangers. Not only was he to be the helper of the book-binders, of the gardeners, of the mariners, of the ferrymen, and of the soldiers, but he was to do more than that. He was to protect people against lightning, against all sorts of storms, against fits of epilepsy—which seem to have been more common once upon a time than today—and against the plague which used to kill hundreds of thousands of people each century or so. That Christopher should be expected to give protection against storms is easy to understand, since he once got the better of a great storm. Perhaps people may have thought that he would ward off the light-

The Story of Saint Christopher

ning because one of his symbols—the tree—attracts lightning. In this way, without being himself harmed, Christopher could put his tree to the service of those who were in danger of being struck by a thunderbolt. Why he was the patron of those who might suffer from some illness, we cannot tell. Perhaps it was because, in one of the stories of his martyrdom, he told a man who had been wounded to put some of his own blood on his wound and because, when the man had done this, he was healed. Whatever the reason for the belief may have been, it is just another proof of Christopher's great popularity, and of the confidence people had that he would readily come to their help in a time of need.

There were two other favors that Christopher would sometimes be sought to render. But the people who asked these favors certainly did not understand things rightly, for they might have known that Christopher would never have interceded for them to gain the fulfillment of such wishes. One of the things these people would ask was that Christopher would reveal their future to them. For some reason they thought that he could do

so if he wished. But no saint has that power unless God should give it to him for some especial purpose—and that a good one. Soothsayers and astrologers have never been encouraged by good Christians; for Christians understand that the future is known to God, but to Him only, and that no human being—not even any saint—can get the power to know what will come to pass. It may be accorded him on some special occasion, but he cannot be depended upon to have it always. God's "good pleasure," as the teachers of the Christians have come to name it, contains our fate; but only God knows what that "good pleasure" is.

There were still other people who did not fear to go to Christopher, not with their real troubles or anxieties, but with the foolish and greedy wish that he would give them treasures. It was a belief of many good folk in times gone by that under the surface of the earth there lie hidden great quantities of gold and of jewels. They also believed that these hidden treasures are under the special care of certain dwarfs or spirits, whom they called by the name of "gnomes" or "trolls," or others be-

The Story of Saint Christopher

sides. Christopher was supposed to have something to do with these fabulous creatures—who never existed—and he was supposed to be able to force them to give up their hoards to those who venerated him. There is no telling how certain ideas ever got into the heads of foolish people; and this is certainly one of those ideas. We know that they had it, however they may have gotten it. But we know also that it was not the kind of idea that was best calculated to please Christopher. For he was honest, and patient, and would have said that wealth was the last thing that could ever have tempted him.

Today Christopher is particularly revered by travelers. There are fewer perils by road and river than there used to be, and bridges have been built in most places where they are needed. But there are other dangers that people knew nothing about long ago, for now we have automobiles and airplanes, steam engines and speed-boats and, sooner or later, any of these may betray their drivers and passengers. We can hardly feel any surer that we shall arrive safely at our destination than people used to feel centuries ago. Christopher has come to be quite a modern saint for this

Saint Christopher

reason. Many people buy medals bearing his image and fasten these to their automobiles, bicycles or airplanes so that they can look at him when they start out from home and feel that he is protecting them for that day.

END

Date Due

APR 18 '45

JUN 17 '47

~~JUL 20 '51~~

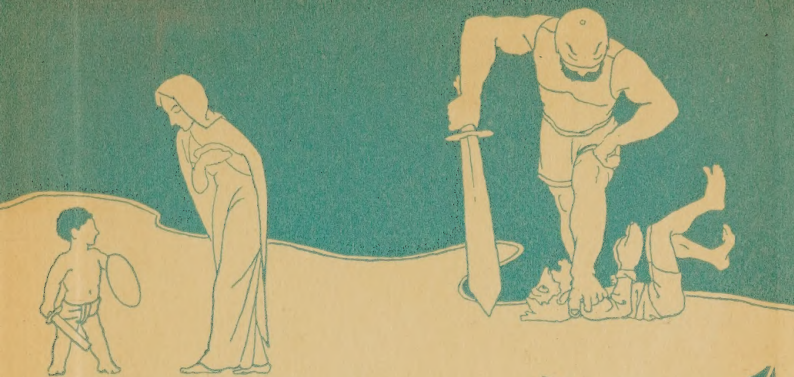
~~MAY 2 '87~~

~~8/2/83~~

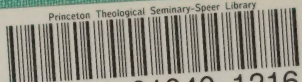
~~NOV 14 1996~~

MAR 10 2003





Princeton Theological Seminary-Speer Library



1 1012 01040 1216